

Written for the Philadelphia Evening Telegraph. Mrs. Jennison's Thanksgiving Guest BY A. E. LANCASTER.

Of all the sad experiences which have come home to me and left their impress upon my heart, none is sadder than that connected with Arthur Tillary, who, more years ago than I care to recollect now, first became my guest on the day before Thanksgiving Day.

A fortnight previous to this, a gentleman, a perfect stranger, had called upon me and asked for a few moments' interview. On going into the parlor I found myself confronted with a tall and most gentlemanly-looking man. His was not a pigmy order of beauty. It was stern and massive. His voice was deep and rich, and he spoke like a man accustomed to be obeyed. The only thing about him which struck me as being particularly disagreeable was his cold, glittering grey eyes. These were fixed upon me slowly, deliberately, relentlessly, whenever he spoke, and whenever I answered him.

Were the rooms which I had advertised still untenanted? They were. Could he see them? He could. They consisted of a bedroom and a sitting-room opening out of one another, and commanding such a view as alone worth the price asked for them. I will venture to say that no one in the suburbs had rooms to let commanding a more spacious and picturesque coup d'œil than was to be seen from those windows.

My visitor regarded the rooms attentively, and seemed to be very well pleased. The mirrors, the lace curtains, the carpets, the bed-hangings, the fauteuils, the lounges, all underwent the rapid yet careful inspection which the connoisseur is accustomed to make, and when he had completed his examination he announced himself quite satisfied, and promised to communicate with me in a few days.

The few days passed, and the expected communication came. It was to the effect that I might consider the rooms engaged, on my own terms, from the following Wednesday, and that their occupant would be Mr. Arthur Tillary, the brother-in-law of the strange gentleman who had called upon me.

I got my rooms ready, and I pride myself in saying that they never looked nicer. The weather was particularly cold for that season of the year, so I caused Elizabeth, the housemaid, to build a rousing fire in the grate, so that at any rate his welcome might be warm.

At about five o'clock in the afternoon of the day on which he was expected I was sitting at the front parlor window, when I was aroused by the opening of the gate at the edge of the lawn which extends in front of the house. In an instant I knew that this must be my gentleman. He was an excessively fine-looking man, of perhaps forty years of age. His fine black hair had already become thickly interspersed with grey. His complexion was florid, but not enough so to possess that beefy look which too often ensanguines the British skin. As he approached nearer, I could see that his eyes were of a deep, serene blue, and shaded by thick lashes that were almost black. But in every nook and corner of his grand face dwelt the indications and beginnings of such beaming smiles, the expression of such a disposition to make the best of things, and insure happiness to all it found itself in contact with, that I found myself lost in admiration of my lodger before he raised his hand to the bell.

Well, if ever any man understood the art of making himself at home, and setting himself at ease, Arthur Tillary was surely that man. We had dinner at half-past six, and at half-past six, just as though he had been living with me for the last twenty years, instead of hardly more than twenty minutes, he took the bottom of my table, and assisted me in the carving. I don't know when I felt more thankful for when two dishes, each demanding a carver, are placed at opposite ends of the table, and only one individual willing to officiate in that capacity is present, what is that one individual to do? This had been precisely my position during the many months I had taken boarders, and how grateful I felt to Mr. Tillary for halving that duty with me, I cannot easily express.

He chatted all dinner most gaily, yet always with discretion and taste; had something to say to everyone, and said the pleasantest things with such a charming air of sincerity that you never despised yourself for yielding to it as flattery. Yet his was not the success of the mere brilliant adventurer. Had it been discovered the next hour that he was a penniless impostor, foisting himself upon me, a poor widow, for the sordid sake of getting gratis board and lodging for a few weeks, I will venture to say that any one would have exclaimed that he had played the gentleman to perfection.

After dinner he joined our little party in the parlor, played and sang for us, told us of his travels in Europe and his adventures in Africa, and finally started off to bed about midnight, after having fairly captivated all our unsuspecting hearts, and that was the last I saw of Arthur Tillary for several days; and here the mystery commences.

At breakfast-time next morning he did not appear. My experience, however, had acquainted me with numerous odd and exceptional specimens of humanity, and I was not at all surprised to receive word from Mr. Tillary, through James, my long-tried and trusty man-servant, that he was not feeling very well, and did not care about any breakfast being either kept or sent in to him. I generally endeavor to let my lodgers be happy in their own way, and after satisfying myself that nothing serious was the matter, felt prepared at any rate to meet him at lunch.

Lunch came, but no Mr. Tillary. Dinner-hour arrived, and our favorite guest was absent. Still the same message was sent from the sick-room, that all he desired was perfect rest and quiet, as he should probably be as well as ever on the morrow.

For once I allowed my better judgment to be overruled. He had looked so good, and

he had behaved so well—with such perfection of good-breeding and good-heartedness—that I suspected no deception, and would have been the first to scout such an idea. Credulous and mistaken as I was, I allowed the whole of the next day to pass, contenting myself with the messages received from the sick-room, and with sending to the invalid all the little tempting delicacies which my culinary imagination could conjure up.

That day was a particularly busy one with me, for it was Thanksgiving Day, and all my boarders remained at home, excepting for an hour or two in the morning when some of them went to church. However, when our Thanksgiving feasting was over—for it was fast-day and not fast-day with us—and the last filbert had been cracked, and the last glass of sherry swallowed, and the whole household had fallen asleep, I too laid my head on the pillow, thankful that the season for thankfulness was over, and that I might luxuriously yawn off into sleep my discontent at the unequal distribution of blessings in this tantalizing world.

The door of my bed-room was locked, but that of the adjoining room, in which my two young children were sleeping, had unaccountably been left open. I could hear their gentle breathing as I lay awake, and I was just dropping off myself when I was thrilled, as wide awake as I had ever been in my life, by a strange, ponderous, muffled sound, which resembled nothing so much as the footsteps of an elephant trying to get up stairs.

I had not time to speculate as to what it could be before I heard it stop before my bed-room door. For a moment or two there was perfect silence, all the more horribly tantalizing from the mysterious sounds that had preceded it. Then there was a sweeping, hurried, indefinite motion over the panels of the door. I could endure it no longer, but, starting to my feet, exclaimed—

"Who's there?"

A voice which I did not recognize, in a deep, hoarse, yet perfectly distinct whisper, replied—

"Brandy! brandy! I want brandy!" For an instant or two there was the same sweeping, hurried, indefinite motion, as of huge hands blindly feeling their way over the panels of the chamber door; then the ponderous, muffled tread repeated itself, and an instant after I turned sick with horror, as I heard the frightful step enter the next room, that occupied by my children, and commenced wandering uncertainly around there.

Frightened as I was, I took no time for thought, but leaping from the bed, rushed through the open door that connected the two apartments. I scarcely know what I expected, or what I thought, but I certainly was not prepared for the sight I encountered. By the dim light of the gas, turned down very low, and shaded, I saw Mr. Tillary bending in his night-shirt over the bed occupied by my children, and fumbling, with actions indescribable, over their counterpane.

Some faint gleams of the beauty of his natural expression must have shone in his face, or I could not possibly have recognized it under the hideous distortion of the moment. Every feature was inflamed and swollen. The eyeballs burned like molten lead, a crimson flush was on his cheeks, and his lips were parted with a panting expression that was horribly repulsive. I don't know what words I used, as I pulled my dressing-gown around me, and preserved just enough presence of mind not to ring the bell.

It was well that I did not betray any timidity at that moment, for seeing me apparently calm, and looking steadfastly at him, he knelt down on the floor, and repeated in the same low, distinct whisper I had heard a few moments ago at my bedroom door—

"Brandy! brandy! give me brandy!" at the same time pawing the carpet with his hands, as a wild beast might use his claws.

I woke one of the children and sent him up stairs to wake James and Elizabeth and send them to me. Then I addressed myself to the miserable man at my feet, and by dint of entreaties and kind words got him down stairs and into his bed. Upon turning on the light in his room, however, a most unexpected and disastrous spectacle was presented. The atmosphere was poisoned with the perfumes of almost every species of malt and spirituous liquor. In many cases, so eager had been the haste of the wretched monomaniac that he had not stopped to pull the corks, but had broken the necks of the bottles, and drank their contents at the imminent risk of cutting his mouth into slices. At least a dozen broken-necked champagne bottles were on the mantel-piece; uncounted Scotch ale bottles were flung in a heap under the bed, and from some not quite emptied ones the frothy liquid was streaming over my nice new carpet. Sherry and brown stout, and gin, and brandy, and whisky alternated with one another over the various pieces of furniture. Under his pillow I found a three-quarter empty phial of McMunn's Elixir, and upon a little stand by his bedside were several bottles containing various preparations of ether. In fact, the whole room was such a pandemonium as only the long-established drunkard could get up who had been furnished with illimitable means and granted a carte blanche.

When James came down he acknowledged, tremblingly, that he had been accessory to the poor wanderer's present condition. Mr. Tillary, it seems, had bribed him to procure the different articles for him, and they had been surreptitiously brought in, either when I had been out, or engaged in some distant part of the house. Of course, I dismissed James on the instant, and Elizabeth and I turned our attention to Mr. Tillary himself.

We sent for the nearest doctor, and about two o'clock in the morning the doctor came. What he said confirmed my worst suspicions. Everything, he remarked, supported the belief that the case was one of confirmed, incurable drunkenness. The broken necks of the bottles, the heterogeneous assortment of liquors, the condition and appearance of the patient, were sufficient evidence of that.

Whether he could live was doubtful. The doctor, himself, who was a personal friend of mine, remained with us watching until morning. We bathed his feet in hot water, put a bladder filled with ice around his head, every half hour the doctor administered a teaspoonful of the potion he had prepared, and I sat at the bedside, holding and stroking the poor patient's hands, but he clung to me with the touching confidence with which the child clings to its mother.

Well, after days of anxious nursing we brought him through alive, at last, but through such depths of despair as it has never been my lot to witness in any one else since. Immediately that the first effects of the liquor had subsided, he grew as gentle as a child, entreated my forgiveness with an abjectness and a self-accrimination that were painful, and hung upon my looks and motions with an intensity that would have embarrassed me had he been less weak and wretched, less in need of every loving word that could be spoken or act that could be done. With the devil of drink cast out of him, he was an angel once again.

When he was sufficiently restored to be able to sit up and converse at length—which was not until after the lapse of a week—I told him what I had done, viz.—That from some papers and memorandum-books I had found among his clothes, I had learned the address of his wife, and had written to her. I can never hope to make you realize the expression of despair which deepened upon his gentle, handsome face when I told him this. After looking at me intently for a moment with trembling lips, he clasped his hands, and then fell idly upon his knees, and bending his head low, while the tears coursed down his cheeks, asked simply whether there was any answer.

There had been no answer—a fact at which I was somewhat surprised myself. A week more passed, and my patient had passed from convalescence to health, and still no answer came. Meanwhile his money was drained, and Mr. Tillary was evidently anxious to conceal from me his brother-in-law's address in the city. All the other boarders in the house intimated that I was a fool for my pains. My most intimate friend, Mrs. Pimperley, who had lived with me ever since I had taken boarders, openly declared that she believed I was fond of drunken men, and as for Major Stenstead—a gentleman who had the suite of rooms on the second floor, and whom I could least afford to lose—he told me in confidence that if Mr. Tillary didn't leave the house, he would. But then I knew he was only joking. To think of the Major pretending to get along without me!

At length there came an answer—a brief note addressed to me from Mrs. Tillary. It was very politely but very distantly worded, and most cold in tone. She made a charming little apology for her husband's conduct, explained that his case was quite hopeless; that she had not given up all attempts to live with him until the thing had repeatedly proved itself an impossibility; but that Mr. Tillary was quite aware of the sole condition on which she would again consent to reside under the same roof with him as his wife. That condition was that no intoxicating beverage of any kind should pass his lips for two years, and that those two years should be passed outside the walls of the asylum.

Outside the walls of the asylum! I shuddered at these words. Could it be that this unhappy being, so fair, so noble, so intellectual, so innately good as I felt he must be, could ever have been classed with those madmen or miscreants, call them what you will, whom the justice of society relegates to the custody of bolt and bar? Determined to clear up the mystery, and to learn all now that I know so much, I handed the letter to Mr. Tillary, and watched him while he read it.

Then, at last, I learned the truth, though it was told me piecemeal, with faltering tongue, and a frame quivering with deep emotion. And his story was this:—That the habit of intoxication had beset him for the past fifteen years, until it had grown with him a monomania; that he had wearied and worn out the patience of every friend he had in the world, not omitting his own wife; that in one of his fits of semi-consciousness he had signed papers which had for ever taken away from him the control of his own property, which was large, and handed it over to his brother-in-law, the gentleman who had called upon me; that finally, one day, more than a year ago, upon recovering from a profound lethargy, induced by intoxication, he had found himself within the walls of a private insane asylum, spoken of by its proprietor by the more euphemistic title of maison de sante; that he was kept a close prisoner there by reason of the physician's certificate that had been procured, until the proprietor of the place had no good excuse for detaining him longer, and had pronounced him cured for the time being; that his brother-in-law had voluntarily supplied him with money and offered to procure rooms for him at my house, assuring him that his wife should join him there; that this was a conspiracy between the brother and sister for once more getting him under lock and key, for that they well knew that if he had money enough in his pocket, he could not resist the temptation to drink, and that if I did not conceal him, or at least express my willingness to receive him as a permanent inmate of my family, two of the keepers from the asylum, attended by his brother-in-law, might be expected to take him away at any moment.

I was dreadfully troubled. I could have wept myself just to see him weep, and hear his solemn protestations of sorrow, and his resolutions to amend. I firmly believe that had circumstances admitted of his remaining with me, I might have wielded over him the restraining influence which he had not found elsewhere. With me he was as docile as a child. All that he needed was firmness and kindness exercised towards him by some one whom he respected and loved. I verily believe that, had I been left to my own impulses, Arthur Tillary would have been with me to-day, a good, a happy, a useful man.

But that was not to be. Early one December morning I went to the city to make some purchases, to call on some friends, and remain at the house of a relative until the following day. It was one of those mild summer-like mornings which sometimes happen with us even in December, and Mr. Tillary, who had walked down the path in front of the house to open the gate for me, stood there bareheaded for a few moments, the sun shining full upon his beautiful iron-grey hair and splendid figure. He kissed his hand to me and waved me a glad good-bye. I nodded my head and said—"I shall see you early to-morrow"—and that is the last I ever saw of Arthur Tillary.

Upon reaching home next day, Elizabeth met me at the door.

"Oh, Mrs. Jennison!" she exclaimed, "did you meet them?"

"Them? Whom?"

"Mr. Tillary, and his brother-in-law, ma'am, and two men!"

I sank down upon the nearest chair, feeling as though the throbbing of my heart must be heard all over the house, and heard what Elizabeth had to say. From that it appeared that the previous evening Mr. Tillary's brother-in-law had arrived; that the two gentlemen had dined together on apparently good terms, although Mr. Tillary had at first evinced symptoms of strong excitement. After dinner the visitor had sent for some brandy, and from what Elizabeth said I had no doubts, and still have none, that the wretch left no means untried to persuade Mr. Tillary to take that first glass which, with his temperament, meant ruin to body and soul. At any rate he was put to bed that night in a state of profound intoxication. To what extent he was plied by his brother-in-law during the night and in the early morning, of course Elizabeth could not say, but soon after breakfast the villain left the house, and only returned in company with two keepers from the asylum, who had remained all night at a neighboring hotel, who, under the brother-in-law's orders, took Mr. Tillary away with them in the morning, in a state of deep unconsciousness, and who, I subsequently had my reasons to believe, had been bribed by him for that purpose.

Once, and only once after, I met the villain who had so wrested the ends of the law as to ruin the body and soul of an innocent man. His name was Fondruth. He was walking in the street at the time, but I instantly went up to him, planted myself in his path, and said—

"Mr. Fondruth, how dare you have suffered your brother-in-law, Mr. Tillary, to become an inmate of my house that Thanksgiving Day, well knowing his weakness as you did?—how dare you have behaved to him and me so villainously?"

He looked at me for a moment with his cold, passionless grey eyes. On the only other occasion on which I had ever seen him his language and manners had been those of a perfect gentleman, so that I was completely taken aback by the following answer:—

"It is your business," he said, never removing his eyes, "to satisfy yourself as to the reference of those you take. You should not have been such a fool."

He would have passed on, but I detained him, my hand upon his arm, for I was sick with thinking what might have happened to an existence with which mine had once been so intimately, yet so briefly connected, and which might have become so fair and peaceful.

"Mr. Tillary," I said, "your brother-in-law—what of him?"

"Poor Tillary!" he exclaimed, with a gloomy smile, in which there was some scorn. "He is as dead to this world, by this time, as though he were in the grave. He is a confirmed epileptic, my dear Mrs. Jennison. He passes his life between four walls, and I doubt whether even you could soothe his ravings now. Good morning."

And raising his hat, he passed from my sight, and I never saw him again.

But often as Thanksgiving Day comes round, there float to me tender, tearful memories of the gentle-dispositioned, sweet-minded man who might have been so much, under different surroundings and more loving influences; and I cannot but believe—anything to the contrary notwithstanding—that He who laid aside his Godhead and became human, will yet give poor Arthur Tillary a chance in that better world which we all hope for.

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LEGAL NOTICES. IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS FOR THE CITY AND COUNTY OF PHILADELPHIA. Estate of HARRIS E. MARSH, deceased. The Auditor appointed by the Court to audit, settle, and adjust the account of HARRIS E. MARSH, trustee of the above estate, and report distribution of the same, will meet all parties interested on MONDAY, November 22, 1869, at 10 o'clock at his office. J. HILL MARTIN Auditor, No. 217 NORTH THIRD STREET.

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